



Best Practice... *in Palliative Care*



ADVANCE CARE PLANNING

You have given bad news to a patient and have opened up discussion about your patient's expectations for his or her quality of life as the disease progresses. How do you put this into a meaningful plan for your patient? Advance Care Planning is a useful tool used in end-of-life care.

Advance Care Planning opens up communication between a patient, their family members and medical staff for the purpose of clarifying treatment preferences, appointing health care proxies and developing a truly individualized plan of care.

Advance Care Planning allows a patient and his or her family to become better informed about their prognosis while helping to determine future medical care that fits the patient's wishes. A key benefit of this plan is determining advance directives. This is often overlooked or is not determined until much later in the patient's illness. The advance

directives such as living wills and durable powers of attorney for health care are important parts of a patient's plan of care.

When should advance care planning be discussed with a patient? This discussion is usually begun when a patient has a prognosis of twelve months or less. Physicians can help open up the discussion by asking the patient, "Have you given any thought to how you wish to be cared for should your illness worsen?"

Because this is a sensitive subject, you may encounter reluctance from the patient to discuss what their future may hold. Advance care planning will evolve over time and you have given your patient the opportunity to be heard, to have their wishes honored, and established a decision-maker for the patient. Most importantly, you have helped create a plan for the patient that matches their goals and values.

For more information, visit our website at www.unityhospice.org

Did you know?

There are several websites that address clinical and program issues related to hospice and palliative care.

In fact, most of the information shared in Best Practices is taken from Fast Facts, a publication found on the EPERC website.

www.eperc.mcw.edu

www.nhpco.org

www.capc.org

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LEADERS IN HOSPICE AND PALLIATIVE CARE

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